

# Weather Spotters - What to Report

National Weather Service - San Diego

**Call: 1-800-240-3022** (this number is restricted; please do not give it out). If busy, call 858-675-8706.

**Submit online:** Click on [http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/sandiego/spotter/SpotterLog\\_EntryForm.html](http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/sandiego/spotter/SpotterLog_EntryForm.html)

## **Flooding**

- Rainfall intensity: how much rain is falling during a specific period of time (e.g., 1 inch in 20 minutes)
- Report flooding that is threatening life or property, or is disrupting traffic.
- Describe the flooding: water depth, extent, time it began and ended, etc.
- Confirmed injuries or damage

## **Winter Weather**

- Amount, rate and time of new snow accumulations
- Elevation of snow level - when rain changes to snow
- Any icing of roads or road closures
- Very low temperatures
- Significant winds and wind chill
- Confirmed injuries or damage

## **Wind**

- Report winds of 30 mph or more
- Speed of sustained wind and speed of gusts
- Any wind related deaths, injuries or damage

## **Extreme Heat**

- Heat index values become dangerous
- Temperatures exceed 95 degrees near the coast
- Temperatures exceed 105 degrees in the inland valleys
- Temperatures exceed 115 degrees in the deserts

## **Fog**

- Report fog when visibility is at or near zero

## **Thunderstorms**

- Estimated location, duration, direction and speed of movement
- Any hail, its size, accumulation, etc.
- Wind speed and gusts
- Rainfall rate and amount
- If lightning strikes any objects
- Confirmed injuries or damage

## **Tornadoes**

- Funnel clouds, waterspouts or any rotating cloud
- Estimated location, duration, direction and speed of movement
- Confirmed injuries or damage

## **Surf**

- Report when surf is 6 feet or more
- Any flooding or damage caused by any combination of high tides and/or high surf

## **Field Guide to Observing Weather**

### **Estimating Winds**

15-20 mph: raises dust and loose paper; small branches moved  
20-25 mph: small trees begin to sway; whitecaps on water  
25-30 mph: large branches in motion; whistling in wires  
30-40 mph: whole trees in motion; difficulty walking against the wind  
40-45 mph: breaks twigs of trees; impedes progress  
45-55 mph: breaks small tree branches; slight structural damage  
55-65 mph: breaks large tree branches; pushes over shallow rooted trees; considerable structural damage to chimneys, TV antennas, etc.  
65-75 mph: widespread damage  
> 75 mph: severe damage and destruction

### **Definitions**

#### **Tornado**

A violently rotating column of air extending from a thunderstorm and in contact with the ground

#### **Funnel Cloud**

A rotating, funnel-shaped cloud extending from a thunderstorm base *not* in contact with the ground

#### **Waterspout**

A small, relatively weak rotating column of air in contact with the ocean or other large body of water

#### **Downburst or Microburst**

A strong downdraft from a thunderstorm, with an outrush of damaging wind on or near the ground

### **Hail Size**

1/4 inch = pea size  
1/2 inch = marble size  
3/4 inch = penny size  
1 inch = quarter size  
1 3/4 inch = golf ball size  
2 3/4 inch = baseball size

### **Remember:**

- Safety first! Do not endanger yourself or others, even if it means your report will be less valuable.
- Be as specific as you can regarding location, time, measurements and impacts.
- You can report at any time. We answer the phone 24 / 7 / 365.
- You can call or submit online from anywhere: at work, hiking, while traveling, etc.
- We have only one phone line for spotters. Please keep your reports brief and to the point.

**Thank you for your help as a weather spotter! The information you give us is essential for making accurate forecasts and issuing timely warnings.**